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Frank  
Montarelli/OCP/R8/USEPA/U  
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To Frank Montarelli/OCP/R8/USEPA/US@EPA

cc

bcc Joyce Ackerman/EPR/R8/USEPA/US

Subject Salt Lake Tribune: Downtown site cleanup wins delay from  
EPA

## **Salt Lake Tribune: Downtown site cleanup wins delay from EPA**

By Judy Fahys

The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune

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A Superfund cleanup of contaminated soil trapped below a parking lot at the old Utah Lumber site will be delayed.

Salt Lake City and the Chamber of Commerce triggered the postponement by asking the federal Environmental Protection Agency to put off the work because of the many road closures and construction already under way in the area surrounding the corner of 100 South and 300 West.

Then, the EPA decided cleanup is not necessary right away at the parking lot where a vermiculite processing plant operated for 44 years, said Sonya Pennock, a public liaison at EPA's Denver office.

"Right now there is no risk because it's capped," she said.

The EPA identified asbestos contamination at the site five years ago and had most of the area cleaned up by 2005. The work cost about \$7.1 million.

Vermiculite ore shipped to the plant from a Libby, Mont., mine naturally contained a highly toxic form of asbestos that has been blamed for hundreds of deaths, thousands of asbestos-related illnesses and a \$271 million cleanup in Libby alone.

The vermiculite went to hundreds of plants around the United States, including two in downtown Salt Lake City. One estimate suggests the tainted material was used in as many as 35 million American homes as insulation.

The federal environmental agency expects the cost of cleaning up the remaining 1 to 2 acres at the 100 South 300 West site to be another \$1 million. But it will be the site's owner, the La Quinta hotel chain, that does the work and pays for it, rather than the EPA, according to Pennock.

Currently, the site is an asphalt-paved parking lot used for events at the EnergySolutions Arena across the street.

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality would prefer that the site be cleaned up now, said department director, Dianne Nielson.

"I want to make sure it's not left there," she said. "I think it's important that they get in there with the property owner and clean it up." Last week, the Utah Department of Health reported a higher-than-expected number of lung-related cancers in a two-mile area around old plants. But the agency did not have enough information to say for sure that the plants might have played a role in the elevated cancer rate.

While the Health Department continues to look for individuals who worked at the plants, Pennock's agency is interested in talking with anyone who may have taken the vermiculite waste for improving their garden soil, paving their driveways or any other use. Her contact number is 303-312-6600. The e-mail is Pennock.Sonya@epamail.epa.gov.

***fahys@sltrib.com***